

Shrewsbury, Mass. 31. 1838.

PHELPS  
MSS.

Dr. Phelps,

Since I saw you last, I have thought much on the importance of having a paper established at Boston, adapted to the wants, I may say, the pressing necessity, of the times, and I have also thought, with pleasure, of the good spirit manifested, so readily, by those with whom we conversed on the subject. I hope it is too deep to be transient - too well settled to be moved by slight causes. I respect Dr. Foster and think he has done good. I would not hurt a hair of his head, for any man who can patiently endure the little martyrdom he has heroically borne from the outset of the Spectator, can endure a bigger one, and I honor the little fingers of a martyr in these days, not pretending however to our own so much myself. I believe few can appreciate justly his self-denying efforts. If I could honestly gather as a nest a portion of those riches that are often brooded over till they are addled, with my present disposition Foster should have so much as would at least keep a Grahamite from starving. But, somehow or other, and perhaps from causes independent of himself, and attributable to the fault of no one, <sup>the Spectator</sup> has, like many a useful thing in its time, done its work, and must give way to another. I think that this must be, on all hands, a conceded point. If Dr. Cowles and yourself could be associated as editors and promoters of a paper, I think that, after being fairly started, it would "go ahead" with an easy speed. I have conversed on the subject with several of my parishioners, and we think that 20 subscribers, at least, may be reckoned as our quota, and I by no means think that we are a peculiar people. The want of a paper, one that has back-bone and sinew, is, I believe, externally felt. Indeed we labor under great disadvantages, for the want of one that



shall inspire confidence and respect. It would be economy of time and money, to start one as soon as may be. Several good causes which need a public vehicle of their principles would be carried forward out of the mire at once by a good team, whilst, without it they would be sinking deeper into it than ever and exposed to the jeers of the papers by. If you and Cowles should write, though you are very different men, I think you both have the right grain. He understands human nature well, though he, from different habits, may not be so well fitted as yourself to meet it, rough and tumble, but then he knows the how and gee of the king's English better than almost any one of my acquaintances. In literature, ethics and theology he would be at home, and, in the latter department, an important one for a paper. He would, I think, on occasion, show a good spirit, as well as a discriminating mind. He has that acuteness and dexterity in polemics which would enable him to water knots which other men would, after wasting time in vain efforts, have to cut, and that with pitiful mangling. I tell you no strange thing when I say that each of you is better fitted for certain departments than the other, and that all of these departments want to be taken care of, in such a paper as is contemplated. Indeed you would be helps to each other in each of your departments, and both of you would, at a year's end be the wiser, and, I should hope, the better, for having been together so long in such a work. It would require all your wisdom, and great grace, of which wisdom, to be sure, is no little part. The place is truly a responsible one, as in every other where there is an opportunity to do much good. In establishing even a religious paper we are not to forget the world we live in. Its business will have to go on, and good men must be engaged in it, and of course must know what the world is, and what it is about. I have often thought of what a gentleman in civil life wrote to his brother, a fellow student with me in theology, as being a good likeness though somewhat of a



caricature. It was this. Many gentlemen of your cloth can tell us very well what sort of a world we should prepare to go to, who, when they get themselves, will know very little about the world they came from. I would, in consideration of the world we live in, suggest the propriety, of having a part of the paper, say one page, with such limitations, however, as exigencies may determine, occupied by secular intelligence well condensed, of the most attractive and useful kind. I the more readily make this suggestion, because a great many christians, from their pursuits in life, as well as habits, feel more bound by necessity to take a secular paper, than by convenience to take a religious one, thinking that the bible and the minister will give them <sup>information</sup> enough on this latter score, and feeling, in many cases, that they cannot afford to take two papers. This, I have no doubt, is a solemn fact, and if we set it down as a sheer blunder on their part, it will not alter the case a whit. I think, too, that this mixing of secular and religious affairs is as proper in a paper as in the sermons of Solomon, or in the goings on of real life. Much depends on the how it is done, and christians ought to be in the habit of turning <sup>to a spiritual account</sup> the most common ~~and~~ worldly affairs that in reality, or by published statement, meet their eyes. The world must be looked at, in order to be better christians. Religion is not, and never was, a thing by itself, but was made to keep company with publicans and sinners, keeping itself pure, and leavening them with its spiritual influences. Of course I leave this point to the discretion of wiser men than myself. A sluggish, prosy paper invites drowsy correspondents, and has a tendency to make such, as many a long year has proved, while a spirited, brisk paper wakes up the mind, puts thought in motion, makes intellect, and secures ~~as~~ a reflex influence on the paper itself. I know the times are out of joint, and that calls for other spirits come on the four winds, but I will not give over the hope



that something is now to be done to meet the wants of the public. Men must strain  
a point to effect an object so desirable, and where there is a discerning phi-  
lanthropy, it will be done. Local or personal squabbles, if there are any,  
must among those whose principles are the same, must die and be buried forever  
by consent of parties, and the great work of giving glory to God, by rais-  
ing his creatures from the darkness of ignorance and sin, as if now were  
the best and only time for doing it, must be taken in hand with the ear-  
nestness of true faith. I have spoken my mind freely, and shall make

Rev. Amos A. Phelps

Newport

Rhode Island

no apology for having thrown into your hands so long a letter, except that  
if I could see you, I should say a great deal more.

Remember me to Mr. Cowles.

affectionately,

Geo. Allen